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ABSTRACT

This paper first puts forward a number of reasons why postgraduate students need to be able to present bibliographic information in a form that satisfies academic conventions. Possible sources of information for the student are then enumerated; global principles of bibliographic presentation (completeness, clarity and convenience, consistency, economy and care) are discussed; and existing provisions for the explicit teaching of the conventions of bibliographic presentation with the Department of Applied Linguistics, Edinburgh, is outlined. Subsequent sections describe a study to assess, by means of performance-sampling and questionnaire, the nature of student difficulties and the extent to which these are catered for by instruction, and present the provisional results of this study. The study suggests that the construction of a correctly referenced bibliography is a much more complex operation than was previously assumed; that instruction does help; and that studies of pre-instruction and post instruction performance are necessary as well as revealing. (Contains 21 references.) (Author)

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BIBLIOGRAPHIC PRESENTATION

Tony Lynch and Ian McGrath (IALS)

ED353788

Abstract

This paper first puts forward a number of reasons why postgraduate students need to be able to present bibliographic information in a form that satisfies academic conventions. Possible sources of information for the student are then enumerated; global principles of bibliographic presentation (completeness, clarity and convenenience, consistency, economy and care) are discussed; and existing provision for the explicit teaching of the conventions of bibliographic presentation within the DAL, Edinburgh is outlined. Subsequent sections describe a study to assess, by means of performance-sampling and questionnaire, the nature of student difficulties and the extent to which these are catered for by instruction, and present the provisional results of this study. Our study suggests that the construction of a correctly referenced bibliography is a much more complex operation than was previously assumed; that instruction does help; and that studies of pre-instruction and post-instruction performance are necessary as well as revealing.

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1. Background

1.1 Is bibliographic presentation a problem?

The apparent lack of interest in the bibliography[1] on the part of researchers in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) might suggest that bibliographic presentation poses few problems. While detailed investigation has been carried out into other aspects of the genre of academic writing - title (Dudley Evans 1984), abstract (James 1984), introduction (Swales 1983; Jordan 1988), argument (Hyland 1990), citation (Dubois 1988) and discussion (McKinlay 1983; Hopkins and Dudley Evans 1988) - there has been no comparable work, as far as we are aware, on the content and form of the bibliography. In a recent UK-based survey of the writing difficulties of British and overseas students (Weir 1988), bibliographic presentation was not among the problem areas observed by academic staff; nor was it perceived as a problem by students.

On the other hand, the attention paid to bibliographies in EAP study skills materials shows that familiarisation with the construction of the bibliography is regarded as necessary by those working at the practical end of the applied linguistic spectrum. The following extracts from EAP courses illustrate respectively a focus on (a) form, (b) content and (c) form and content:

(a) References, at the end of an essay for example, are arranged in alphabetical order (a-z) of the author's surname or the name of the organisation. If more than one reference is given by the same author, then the earlier dated reference will appear first...

(Jordan 1990.123)

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(b) You *must* make a list of all the books that you have read or referred to in writing your essay. But don't list any you have not read!

(Wallace 1980:162-63, original emphasis)

(c) A bibliography is an alphabetical list of all sources a person has used. It is set out at the end of each piece of written work. **It must be in alphabetical order** and each entry must be laid out in a strictly ordered sequence...

A bibliography gives all the information a reader needs to find the source in a library. The information for each entry should always be presented in the same strict order. This order is used because the libraries in the academic world catalogue their books by filing the information about them in this same sequence. This means that everyone can find quickly and easily the books they are searching for, provided the writer of the paper writes his bibliography correctly.

(Smith and Smith 1988:172-3, original emphasis)

1.2 Functions of the bibliography

The authors of the third extract (from a study skills course for ESL undergraduates) make a number of assumptions. Apart from those of culture (a homogeneous 'academic world'), economics (the availability of books) and possibly sex (*his* bibliography), Smith and Smith imply that the purpose of a bibliography is to facilitate subsequent research. While this is true, it is certainly not the whole truth. Bibliographies have other functions, one of which is *to establish a writer's academic credentials* by indicating the breadth and/or depth of their acquaintance with the relevant literature. This is of course open to abuse: Extract 2 above exhorts EAP students not to exaggerate the extent of their reading by listing items they have not read.

Conversely, convention requires *open acknowledgment of sources*. The academic community - or at least this branch of it - expects writers not only not to claim to have read work that they have not seen, but also to admit having read all the items they have benefited from. The strength of the taboo on academic plagiarism varies from place to place and from time to time; at the time of writing, for example, the topic is receiving attention in the specialist and general press in Britain[2]. A further expectation is that the writer will have consulted primary sources wherever possible, rather than relying on secondary sources such as reviews and surveys.

Our own particular interest in the bibliography, for the purposes of this paper, relates to a sub-category of the role of references as credentials, namely the writer's ability to *demonstrate familiarity with academic norms*. This arises from our teaching on the course in Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh, for which students have to produce six written assignments (projects and dissertation) over a 12-month period. In this context, writers are primarily addressing a reader/assessor, rather than later researchers.

1.3 Reader/assessor's perceptions

One response to our earlier question 'is bibliographic presentation a problem?' is that it can be a reading problem as much as a writing problem. Faced with the omission of certain details - or, indeed, of whole items - from a list of references, the reader's reaction is likely to be one of dissatisfaction or even annoyance. Even superficial errors in the bibliography, as elsewhere, can have negative repercussions. As Brookes and Grundy (1990: 60) point out, 'a piece of writing that has not been proof-read will irritate readers, impede rapid understanding, and cause readers to think that the writer is less intelligent and educated than may be the case'.

In the specific case where the reader is engaged in the assessment of the text as part of an academic course, the repercussions may manifest themselves in the mark awarded - a point underlined recently in a report by the external examiner for the M.Sc. in Applied Linguistics.

1.4 Writer/teacher's responsibility

In addition to the short-term demands of the course, there is the longer-term issue of participants' future writing. Many of those graduating from the course will address wider audiences later in their careers through research theses, articles or books, so attention to referencing techniques during the M.Sc. course is likely to have a value in helping them to meet the demands of readers - including journal referees and publishers' readers - of their subsequent work. Moreover, some M.Sc. students will themselves go on to teach higher degree students, who will also require guidance in academic presentation skills.

1.5 Summary

We have argued that despite its neglect in applied linguistic research, the bibliography fulfils certain important functions in academic writing. Its principal roles are to facilitate subsequent research and to establish the credentials of the writer as a member of the academic community. This second role has a number of aspects, among them the acknowledgment of sources, and in the narrower context of a university course, the need to satisfy assessors' expectations about a student's control of the academic register. Beyond the confines of the course, competence in bibliographic presentation should also pay dividends in future work written for a wider readership and in the subsequent instruction of others.

2. Sources of help

Students seeking information about referencing conventions in their academic field are likely to have access to five potential sources of help. Firstly, there may be guidelines representing a consensus within a specialist field, such as the *MLA Stylesheet* or the 'Vancouver style' in biomedical publications[3].

Secondly, there are stylesheets produced by individual journals; those in the applied linguistics field range from the (very) brief information offered by *Applied Linguistics* to the fuller specification in the notes for contributors to *English Language Teaching Journal* and *TESOL Quarterly*.

Thirdly, there are locally produced guidelines. At Edinburgh, the Main Library offers a pamphlet entitled *Dissertation and Report Writing: Guidance Notes on the Use and Acknowledgment of Sources*, and some departments, such as the Centre for Tropical Veterinary Medicine, provide detailed handouts giving advice on writing course assignments, covering matters of overall organisation and linguistic style, as well as presentation.

Fourthly, there are published manuals written for first-language writers, which may give advice restricted to a specific academic discipline (e.g. Lock 1977 on writing for medical journals) or include some of the different conventions in a number of specialisms (e.g. Turabian 1973).

Finally, there are EAP-oriented materials, which offer similar information but in a more overtly didactic way: courses that focus specifically on the skills of academic writing (e.g. Hamp-Lyons and Courter 1984; Lynch 1989; Jordan 1990) and global study skills textbooks (e.g. Wallace 1980; Williams 1983; Smith and Smith 1988).

It is worth pointing out that no matter how 'general' such texts claim to be, they tend to reflect referencing conventions specific to one discipline or group of disciplines. None of the EAP courses cited above, for example, mentions the option of ordering references numerically in order of citation - accepted practice in a number of academic fields - rather than in alphabetical and chronological sequence.

As we have seen, there are various sources of assistance available to a student who takes a decision to *learn* about bibliographies; the alternative is to *acquire* familiarity with the conventions through natural exposure to the generic features of the reference lists encountered in books and articles read during the course. Neither is an easy option.

First, there is the fact that the would-be learner is presented with conflicting advice. We might take as an example the inclusion or omission of inclusive page numbers in a reference from a journal or edited collection. That information is regarded as essential by the writers of most of the sources cited above - and this was also the majority view of our DAL and IALS colleagues - but a substantial number of publications appear to allow writers to omit page numbers, particularly in the case of contributions to collections.

However, there are particular difficulties for the acquirer. Not the least of these is the sheer number of elements involved (see Table 3 in section 5.4) and the fact that some of those elements are in free variation, for example, the use of underlining versus italics when highlighting book and journal titles, or the ordering of publication details such as date, publisher and place of publication. There is the additional problem that not all naturally occurring data offer a good model. Even in the case of published articles, errors can slip through the editing process. Extract (1) comes from a journal article (dealing, ironically, with the process and product of academic writing) and contains at least 10 types of error:

(1)

Britton, J 1970) *Language and Learning* Penguin 1(2), 81-92
Brown, G and Yuls, G (1983) *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge University Press
Carrell, P. (1983) 'Some issues in studying the role of schemata, or background knowledge in second language comprehansion', *Reading in a Foreign Language*.
Davies, F and T. Greene, (1984) *Reading for Learning in the Sciences*, Oliver and Boyd
Davies, F (1985) 'Towards a classroom-based methodology for studying information structures in texts for specific purposes', in J. Ulijn & A.K. Pugh (Eds) *Reading for Professional Purposes. Methods and Materials* ACCO Leuwan.
Dudley Evans, T (1985) *Writing Laboratory Reports*, Nelson Wadsworth.
Dudley Evans, T 'Genre analysis, an investigation of the introduction and discussion sections of M Sc dissertations ' in M. Coulthard (Ed.) (1986) *Talking About Text* Discourse Analysis Monograph no 13, English Language Research, University of Birmingham
Entwistle, N and P Marsden. (1983) *Understanding Student Learning*. Croom Helm
Fries, P (1983) 'On the status of theme in English: argumants from discourse . in P S Petofi and Sozer (Eds). *Micro and Macro Connexity of Texts*. Helmut Buske Verlag

In the case of journal articles, it is not possible to judge whether bibliographic errors are those of the original writer, of the accredited editor of the collection, or of the publisher's desk editor. But whatever the source, the effect is that a student's search for models of academic practice becomes more frustrating.

3. Basic principles: the five Cs[5]

Despite the surface differences in the various sources of information, it is possible to discern five or six underlying guiding principles: (1) completeness (2) clarity and convenience - all of which we regard as *essential*; (3) consistency (4) eConomy and (5) care, which in our view are *desirable* characteristics. The principles are discussed briefly below and elaborated in the form of a categorial system in section 5.

3.1 Completeness

One of the functions of a bibliographic entry, as we indicated in section 1, is to enable the reader to look up or obtain the item referred to with - it should go without saying - the least inconvenience. Completeness, in other words, is a form of academic good manners. At the level of the whole work, there should be a bibliographic entry for all items referred to in the body of the text. Individual entries should also be complete in themselves. For references to books, this will necessitate the provision of such details as the name of the author or authors, the date of publication, publisher, and so on; for journal articles, the entry should include the volume number, issue number and page numbers; and for a paper in an edited collection, the names of the editors, the date of publication (since this may be different from the year in which the paper was first published), the title of the collection and the relevant page numbers. The details mentioned here, it should be emphasised, are merely illustrative - for reasons of space; examples of full references are given in the bibliography that concludes this paper.

3.2 Clarity and convenience

The reader's convenience will also be affected by the way in which the bibliography and its individual entries are organised and presented.

For the reader who wishes to access a bibliography independently of the preceding text, an alphabetical ordering by authors' surnames will make it easier to locate particular entries quickly. If there are two or more entries relating to the same author, convention dictates that these should be chronologically ordered (earlier before later) and that jointly authored works should follow single author entries.

Within entries, various ordering possibilities exist. Our own preference is to highlight certain details by placing:

- the date immediately after the author's name (rather than at the end of the entry)
- the publisher after the place of publication
- any page references at the end of the entry.

Again, we have the reader's needs in mind: the date is one means by which items are frequently remembered and referred to; the publisher is normally a more significant piece of information than the place of publication since a publisher's catalogue is one access-route for the would-be purchaser or bookseller seeking further details; and for the person who is looking up the item in a journal or collection, the page reference is also a key piece of information.

Presentation is also important. Spacing between entries and indenting all run-on information make it easier for the reader to find an individual entry, as well as being easier on the eye. Highlighting of book and journal titles and punctuation, or lack of it, also have a part to play; the examples below indicate the potential for confusion when highlighting and/or punctuation marks have been omitted:

(2) ... in Smith, A.G. (ed.) Communication and Culture Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York 1966 pp 505-16

(3) Haugen, E. (1966) Dialect, Language, Nation In Pride, J.B. & Janet Holmes (eds) (1972) Sociolinguistics .....

3.3 Consistency

At one level, consistency is a relatively trivial matter: whether a comma or colon is used between place of publication and publisher will not normally pose a problem for the reader, although such details may irritate the more pedantic of reader-assessors; at another level, however, consistency can have a bearing on clarity, as when the distinction between titles of books and papers is not carefully observed, as in the case of these further entries from the bibliography used in example (1):

(4)

McCarthy, M (1984) 'A new look at vocabulary in EFL'. *Applied Linguistics*. Vol. 5, No.1 (pp 12-22).
McCarthy, M. (in press) Some vocabulary patterns in conversation To appear in Carter, R. and McCarthy, M.J (Eds) *Vocabulary in Language Teaching and Learning*, Longman.
Rumelhart, David E. (1984) *Understanding understanding*, In Flood J. (Ed.) op. cit.
Swales, J. (1981) *Aspects of Article Introductions* Research Report No.1 University of Aston, Language Studies Unit.

3.4 Economy

Unlike the principles previously discussed, that of economy is of concern to publishers and should also be a concern to writers. Basically, this principle operates in conjunction with that of completeness. It says: *Give all the information that is necessary but no more than this*. Economy dictates, for instance, that where two or more items in a bibliography refer to the same edited collection, then the collection will be given a separate entry and the references to it can be correspondingly abbreviated as shown below:

(5) ... in Richards (ed.) 1978: 179-203

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Similarly, there seems little value in giving anything more than the initial of an author's first name, unless a second initial serves to distinguish between otherwise identical entries in the same bibliography. Following the same principle, we do not ourselves use *pp*, since in appropriately punctuated entries (6), there can be no confusion, nor do we include what we consider to be irrelevant features of the publisher's name such as Ltd or Inc. We do, however, give the city of publication (as well as the state, county or country if appropriate), since we feel that this can be important for the reader or bookseller trying to trace an item (7).

(6) ... ELTJ 42/1: 23-29

(7) ... Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall

3.5 Care

The principle of care comprises at least three elements: factual accuracy, spelling of proper names, and attention to all the other principles mentioned above.

Factual accuracy - in dates, titles, page references and so on - is important because inaccuracies may make it difficult for others to find the item referred to but also because in cases where primary sources are not available an error in one bibliography can result in the same error in a succession of bibliographies.

The same point might be made in relation to the misspelling of proper names where these are unfamiliar; where misspellings are obvious and numerous, they are likely to affect the reader's judgement of the writer. In particular, students of applied linguistics who produce aberrant spellings of 'linguistics' or who fail to spell their author-lecturers' names correctly may well come in for caustic comment.

3.6 Summary

For the student writer, the five Cs might serve as guiding principles; for the reader-assessor, they might be seen as criteria for evaluation. Whether as principles or criteria, they are clearly not watertight, but in practical terms this is immaterial. The writer who gives due attention to all of the principles discussed in this section will produce a bibliography which not only fulfils its primary functions of acknowledging sources and guiding the interested reader but also provides a suitable model for other writers of bibliographies.

4. Workshop, input materials and optional essay (1987-90)

The decision to offer M.Sc. students practical help in the presentation aspects of academic writing in general and referencing conventions in particular resulted, as we have indicated above, from an awareness that some form of fairly explicit guidance was needed.

We chose to provide this guidance in three modes: through specially-written materials which incorporated advice and practical tasks; through an optional workshop session (of 90-120 minutes); and through feedback on an optional essay. The first section of the materials was handed out in advance of the workshop with the request that students work through it; the second section was handed out in the course of the workshop. Details of the essay, which was intended to provide practice in applying the principles presented through the materials and workshop, were given at the end of the workshop.

The following points were included in the written materials:

- general guidelines for academic writing (organisation, language, presentation)
- the contents page
- paraphrase, summary, quotation and plagiarism
- bibliographic presentation
- proofreading
- using a word-processor

We planned and taught the workshop together. From the beginning it was seen, like the practice essay, as an optional supplement to the materials, an opportunity for those students, first- and second-language speakers of English, who felt unsure about the presentation of written work to gain a clear understanding of what would be expected of them when they submitted their first piece of assessable work. When we planned the first workshop we had no idea how many students would avail themselves of this opportunity; in fact, the majority have tended to do so, perhaps fearing that they might miss something really important if they absented themselves.

The workshop supplements the materials in four ways. Discussion of students' answers to the tasks enables us to raise awareness of the principles discussed in Section 3; we highlight points which in our experience need to be stressed; we add a number of relatively minor points not dealt with in the materials (such as the use of *op.cit.*, *ibid.* and other in-text referencing conventions); and we encourage students to ask questions. It is on the basis of this last function that the workshop can perhaps be most easily justified. A good set of instructional materials will tell students what the tutor thinks they need to know, but will not necessarily cover all the points about which students feel doubtful (as our study has once again illustrated).

Over the years, we have made a number of minor modifications to the materials and workshop. The first version (1987) contained neither general guidelines on academic writing nor suggestions concerning the use of a word processor. Changes in later versions have been largely dictated by methodological considerations: for instance, to free more time for discussion during the workshop we felt it desirable to cut out certain tasks; others were transferred to the first set of materials, which students were asked to prepare in advance. We have also benefited from student questions in that we are now better able to anticipate some of the points that need to be made.

All these changes, we should emphasise, were the result of our own intuitions; such informal student feedback as we received had been reasonably positive and we had made no attempt to seek feedback by formal means. However, as we read through student assignments last year, checking bibliographies as a routine part of assessment, it occurred to us that although individuals were clearly not producing work that conformed in every particular to the academic conventions we had presented, we had no overall view of students' competence or the extent to which they had benefited collectively or individually from our efforts. We make a point of evaluating the full-length courses for which we are responsible; the time had come, we decided, to assess the effectiveness of our teaching procedures and materials in respect of this mini-component of the M.Sc. programme.

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5. The study (1990-91)

5.1 Aims

Our study, carried out with the 1990-91 M.Sc. group, had the following aims:

(1) to investigate the range and nature of students' familiarity with bibliographic conventions on entry into the course;
(2) to identify and, if possible, to explain the most common errors of commission and omission in relation to these conventions following treatment;
(3) to look for differences in individuals' learning and to suggest possible causes of such differences (e.g. previous postgraduate course experience, previous English-medium instruction, native knowledge of English, attendance at the workshop and use of the handout materials);
(4) in the light of (3), to gauge the general effectiveness of the components of the academic writing package (materials, workshop and optional essay) in enabling students to cope with referencing in their first course project, and to establish the need for adjustments or additions to our materials and method.

5.2 Method

It had been our intention to collect data on students' performances at four stages: (i) a pre-workshop test involving the identification and correction of errors in a bibliography (see Appendix A); (ii) a post-workshop test identical to the first test; (iii) the optional essay; (iv) their first course assignment. The first three sets of data were to be collected in November 1990 and the last in February 1991.

In the event, only three students did the optional essay; that data has therefore been excluded from the study. We have also disregarded the post-test data produced by students in November for reasons of non-comparability: firstly, not all the students who came to the workshop stayed to do the test; secondly, of those who did complete the test, some referred to the handout materials in answering the questions and others believed they were not allowed to. Our analysis therefore focuses on results from the pre-test and the students' own bibliography for their first project.

In addition to the performance data, we administered two simple questionnaires in February 1991. One asked the students, among other things, what use they had made of the November materials in writing their project and whether there were any points which they had needed to refer to but were not included in the handout. The other went to DAL and IALS staff involved in M.Sc. project assessment, eliciting their attitudes to bibliographic presentation in general and to the relative importance of the specific points covered in our materials.

5.3 Materials

Pre-test

Our pre-test was designed to measure students' ability to detect some common errors we had observed in previous M.Sc assignments. They were asked to correct the errors they noticed and to indicate where details were missing. It contained a total of 33 instances of error, in 22 separate categories, as shown below.

Table 1. Error categories featured in the pre-test

	categories	instances
	ordering	
1.	alphabetical	1
	consistency/clarity	
2.	distinction between books and articles	2
3.	highlighting of book title	3
4.	highlighting of journal title	1
5.	author: name or initial	2
6.	order of publication details	1
7.	order of editor's/editors' initials and surnames	1
	completeness	
8.	title of article in collection	1
9.	date of publication (main item)	1
10.	date of publication (collection)	1
11.	page numbers (item in journal/collection)	3
12.	both/all (co)authors' names	1
13.	author's initial	2
14.	initial after surname	1
15.	editorship acknowledged	1
16.	publisher (book)	1
17.	place of publication (book)	1
18.	volume number (journal)	1
19.	issue number (journal)	1
	other	
20.	spelling (of proper names)	3
21.	inappropriate inclusion of specific page numbers	1
22.	punctuation (consistency/clarity)	3
	Total	33

In marking students' pre-tests we chose to score their performance in terms of categories of error (i.e. out of 22). The alternative method - counting each instance or error identified - has the disadvantage that two students might achieve the same numerical score but with a different range of error awareness.

Project bibliography

The materials for comparison with the students' pre-test scripts were the bibligraphies they produced for their first project, handed in during February 1991. Their performance was scored in two ways: a mark indicating the percentage of fully correct categories corresponding to those featured in the pre-test, and an overall score of their performance on all categories, including those not featured in the pre-test (see Table 3 for a complete list of categories).

5.4 Results

In section 5.1 we stated the aims of our study. We now consider each of the points in turn, beginning with a comparison of students' demonstrated knowledge of bibliographic conventions on entry to the course and after treatment.

Table 2 Scores on pre-test (1) and project bibliographies (2a, 2b), as percentages

student	(1) pre-test % score	(2a) % score on pre-test categories	(2b) % score on all categories
1.	41	81	70
2.	55	59	63
3.	55	77	79
4.	27	85	93
5.	18	74	67
6.	45	80	89
7.	23	78	73
8.	41	74	81
9.	45	91	93
10.	55	90	89
11.	23	89	88
12.	27	62	67
13.	14	81	78
14.	27	88	86
15.	64	83	86
16.	5	92	94
17.	45	52	62
18.	32	94	96
19.	59	86	89
20.	32	75	77
21.	45	54	72
22.	68	100	100
23.	18	78	79
24.	41	93	87
25.	18	85	81
26.	14	77	78
27.	86	67	75
28.	45	83	86
29.	36	81	81
30.	27	81	77
31.	36	48	52
32.	14	72	71
33.	64	72	71
34.	18	82	87
mean	37	78	80

It is worth stressing that it is not possible to make a direct comparison of scores in column 1 on the one hand and columns 2a and 2b on the other, since not all the students' bibliographies contained the categories featured in the pre-test.

Nevertheless, the overall picture that emerges from these results is an (expected) increase in performance from pre-test to project, even though the latter was based on productive performance. Only one student (number 27) achieved lower percentage scores in his project bibliography than on the pre-test; all other students showed an improvement, averaging some forty percentage points, and one student (number 16) moved from 5% (i.e. a single category correct) on the November test to a project bibliography score of 92/94%.

In general terms, then, the group demonstrated that they had achieved markedly more ease and familiarity with bibliographic conventions between November and February.

The fact that the mean score on overall performance in the project bibliography was slightly - though not significantly - higher than the score for the features dealt with in the pre-test suggests that the students had been sensitised through the notes and the workshop to the need to pay attention to points *beyond* those featured in the test (see Table 3).

Table 3. Analysis of errors in project bibliographies, by category

ordering of references within list	
* alphabetical	0
* chronological	
- earlier before later	2
- distinction between items published in same year	3
* single-author before joint-author items	2
consistency/clarity	
* distinction between book and article titles	4
* highlighting of title	
- book	6
- journal	6
* author: full name or initial	6
* ordering of publication details	4
completeness	
* title of item in collection	0
* date of publication	
- main item	3
- collection in which main item appears	13
* page numbers: journal or collection	14
* all authors' names	5
* author's initial	
- inclusion	1
- after surname	0
* edited collection	
- editor's/editors' name(s)	4
- editor's/editors' initial(s)	4
- ed(s) indicated as such	4
- sep. entry for collection ref'd to more than once	6
* publisher	5
* journal	
- volume number	1
- issue number	11
* place of publication	19
* inadequately referenced lecture series	1
other	
* spelling	15
* punctuation/layout	
- separation of items (indentation/spacing)	2
- clarity	N/A
- consistency	N/A
- place of brackets (around eds/date)	3
* inappropriateness	
- abbreviations	1
- underlining	1
- reference to specific page cited in quotation	1
- reference to secondary source	1
- *vide supra* or *op.cit.* (within bibliography)	2

[numbers on right indicate students producing that error; n=34]

A tabulation of this kind has certain limitations. For instance, it cannot reveal the degree of consistency of error within an individual student's work. Nor - without further calulations - can it indicate the relation between erroneous and error-free performance on each category across the corpus.

What does emerge from the table is that the project bibliographies contained well over thirty distinct categories of error, and that although some of these were clearly idiosyncratic (e.g. the use of *vide supra* to refer to another entry in the bibliography), other error-types were sufficiently widespread as to merit further investigation. Here, for reasons of space, we focus on just four of these:

- *place of publication:* this was omitted in some cases where the publisher was a university press; in other cases, only the country, county or state was given (e.g. Great Britain, Suffolk, New Jersey) rather than the city plus, where relevant, the more general location

- *page numbers:* these were omitted for both journal articles and items in collections; two students consistently gave page references for journal articles but not for items in collections

- *date of publication of item in collection*: this was a wholly consistent omission in all cases

- *inconsistent use of authors' initials and full names*: this might be attributed to any of a number of possible causes, e.g. the assumption that the full name is appropriate for a sole author but not for joint authors; the (blind) copying of the full name from the original source; the belief that any name after the first, as in the case of joint authors or editors, may be given in full.

As these few examples illustrate, a more finely-grained analysis - and probably reference to our informants - will be necessary if we are to establish the nature and extent of any rule-based behaviour.

We would like now to summarise our findings on the second issue mentioned in our aims, namely, the possible influences on differential rates and extent of improvement demonstrated in the pre-test and project performances. In section 4 we mentioned three potential factors affecting students' competence on entry and after treatment: first-language use of English; previous experience of an English-medium postgraduate course; experience of the November workshop. The results of our analysis are provisional but, we think, suggestive.

Table 4 Mean scores (in rounded percentages), overall and by variable

	Pre-test (pre-test	Project (overall) categories)	Project
overall mean (n=34)	37	78	80
L1 English user (n=15)	36	76	78
L2 English user (n=19)	38	80	82
+ previous postgraduate experience (n=13)	43	76	79
- previous postgraduate experience (n=21)	32	79	81
+ workshop (n=29)	34	83	82
- workshop (n=5)	53	59	68

The first point to note is the lack of any measurable effect of the L1/L2 difference; the L1 users in fact scored lower on average than their L2 counterparts, though not significantly so. In the case of the possible positive effect of previous postgraduate experience in English medium, any initial advantage of such a background (t=1.55, but significant only at the 0.2 level) had disappeared by the time of the project.

It is when we consider the performance of students who did, or did not, attend the November workshop that we find the strongest statistical effect - although the small number of the non-attenders (n=5) means we have to interpret the figures with caution. The students who did not come to the workshop began with higher mean scores on the pre-test, 53% compared with 34%; comparison between the two groups' means gives a value of t=2.05, significant at the .05 level. So, as a group, the five students who did not attend the workshop were significantly more proficient in recognising bibliographical errors than those who chose to attend the workshop. (One possibility is that it was a feeling of relative satisfaction with their pre-test performance - although the results were not made available to the students - that led some of the five to decide not to attend the workshop.

However, by the time the project was handed in, the attenders achieved sharply better performances in their own bibliographies (83% and 82% on pre-test categories and overall) than did the non-attenders (59% and 68%). The t-tests for these results give values of t=4.24, significant at the .001 level, for the pre-test category score (column 2) and t=2.57, significant at the .01 level, for the overall project bibliography score (column 3).

A matched t-test was used to compare the students' performances horizontally, i.e. from pre-test to project; non-attenders' mean increase from 53% to 59% does not reach significance at the customary .05 level (t = -1.71, significant at .2 only). On the other hand, the dramatic improvement, from 34% to 83%, in the scores of students attending the workshop is - as one might expect at first glance - a statistically robust one (t = -13.84, significant at the .001 level).

5.5 Discussion

It is tempting to conclude that it was exposure to the information provided at our workshop that resulted in the dramatic improvement in the mean scores of those who attended the session, but of course we are dealing here with statistical correlations and not (necessarily) with a causal link. Even if the non-attenders had been a large enough group to allow us to be more confident about the statistics, it is unlikely that the connection between attendance and success is a straightforward one.

For one thing, the distinction between attenders and non-attenders is not absolute: even those who were not at the workshop had access to the session handouts; conversely, judging by their questionnaire responses, not all students who attended the workshop referred back to the materials when writing up their project. The possible relationship between access to (and active use of) the materials is something we intend to investigate further.

Another reason for caution in interpreting the data is the lack of direct comparability between the pre-test, which involved *receptive* identification of errors, and the project, which required students to *produce* their own bibliographies.

If non-attendance really is a contributory factor in relative lack of success on our measures, one possible interpretation is that non-attendance at the workshop reflects an individual's mental set towards this particular aspect of academic culture - a relative lack of concern with the details of written presentation, or a perception that content matters more than form - which is not susceptible to change over the short period between workshop and project. If this conjecture is not too wide of the mark, it may nevertheless be that in the longer term such an attitude will change, particularly if shortcomings in a student's first project bibliography are brought to the writer's attention.

One of the areas we intend to pursue is the issue of the *relative priority* for the reader (and therefore for the writer) of specific bibliographic features. The questionnaire completed by staff in DAL and IALS yielded information that is of potential benefit both to M.Sc. students, in knowing which points to check over with particular care, and also to ourselves, in redesigning future materials on bibliographic presentation.

In a preliminary analysis of 11 colleagues' responses, we have identified a baker's dozen of points, all of which were judged to be important by nine or more respondents. These are shown in Table 4, together with the mean percentage scores achieved on those points in the pre-test (in receptive mode) and in the project (productive mode).

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Table 5. Important bibliographic features (staff consensus)

	pre-test mean %	project mean %
a. alphabetical ordering of items	8	100
b. title of article in collection	50	100
c. author's initial	25	97
d. volume number (journal)	56	94
e. date of publication (book)	75	91
f. distinction between book and article titles	15	86
g. editor's name (collection)	25	85
h. publisher's name (book)	36	84
i. editor's initial	-	83
j. distinction betw items by author in same year	-	67
k. spelling	72	42
l. date of collection where cited item appears	17	41
m. issue number (journal)	31	35

The data in this table suggests that on the first nine of these priority items (a-i) students had achieved a reasonable degree of mastery (80% or more). However, in the case of spelling, percentage scores were lower in the project than in the pre-test. We believe this is explained by the different modes of performance - receptive and productive: it may well be easier to recognise someone else's spelling errors than one's own. Items j, l and m, though, suggest that we should do more in future to ensure that students are made aware of the need to provide the required information on those points.

6. Conclusions

Although we would again stress that this is a working paper on an ongoing study, we feel able to draw certain provisional conclusions. The first is that the now-attested low level of familiarity with bibliographic conventions on entry to the course justifies the provision of instruction in some form.

The second relates to the statistical link between non-attendance at the academic writing workshop and significantly weaker performance on the project bibliography. As we have suggested, there is unlikely to be a direct causal link between the two. Whatever the nature of the relationship, our inclination is not to make the workshop compulsory but rather to do more to make the handout materials self-standing and less dependent on clarification and expansion at the workshop.

Thirdly, the 1990 pre-test brought to our attention a number of points which had not been dealt with in the handouts and which we were able to mention in the course of the workshop. It is clear from the project results that some of those points were not retained by all the students who attended - and of course were unavailable to students who did not. For a future year, these points would need to be included in the handout materials.

Fourthly, certain errors are consistent within (and to a degree across) individual performances and suggest that the writer is operating what we might call an 'interlanguage' rule. Examples include the omission of journal issue numbers, or the inclusion of place of publication for journals. It seems likely that errors of this sort stem

from unawareness rather than a belief that the details are insignificant; whatever the reason, such points also need to be included in future guidance notes.[6]

Fifthly, the handouts deliberately included a great many examples of references, on the assumption that students would be able to infer certain rules from them. That this did not always happen - as manifested by the project results - may have been because students did not use the examples in this way (a limitation of the 'acquisition' route) or because the relevant data was not available in the samples supplied. This would seem to be the case, for example, with the need to be specific about place of publication and to include editors' initials in a full reference.

There would seem to be two basic options as to the nature of the guidance notes. At their simplest, they might comprise a list of model references, perhaps categorised according to the nature of the item: e.g. *Books, Journal articles, Item in collection*. However, our preference is for a set of notes which (a) *explains* why bibliographic presentation is important (b) *enumerates* the principles underlying good bibliographies and (c) *exemplifies* these principles through a list of references categorised and roughly graded for complexity. This will be one of our tasks for 1991-2.

We think that the workshop itself should be offered at a time when students are most likely to perceive its value, i.e. a week or so before the hand-in date for their first assessed piece of work. We plan to supply no tasks, but to respond to students' questions concerning the (new-style) handout and the specific references they wish to include in their bibliographies. It should be interesting to see how results compare.

Two final thoughts. The first is specific to the academic issue we chose to investigate. Although one might assume that bibliographic presentation represents a relatively restricted repertoire, we have been struck by the sheer complexity of the rules (both positive and negative) with which the competent writer needs to operate. Bibliographic presentation is a problem.

The second thought is a general one. This study has underlined for us the need for teachers to assess, from time to time, the nature of students' problems at both initial and intermediate points in a course, and the degree to which teaching/input helps to solve those difficulties. As a result of this study, we should be able to do more to help next time round.

Notes

1. Throughout this discussion we use the term 'bibliography' as an alternative to '(list of) references', rather than in the sense of 'guide to reading'.

2. At the time of writing, the issue of plagiarism has been featured in recent articles in 'New Scientist' (9.2.91 and 23.2.91) and 'The Observer' (3.3.91). For a cross-cultural perspective on the topic, see Brookes and Grundy (1990), chapter 2.

3. The 'Vancouver style' is the informal term for the 'Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals', which resulted from a meeting of journal editors in Vancouver in 1978. These guidelines include bibliographic formats used by the US National Library of Medicine and have since been revised; the most recent edition is reprinted in the British Medical Journal of 9.2.91.

4. The bibliography is from Davies (1988).

5. This heading owes something to D. Brown's (1980) 'Eight Cs and a G'. Guidelines for Vocabulary Teaching. RELC Journal Supplement No.3. Singapore, RELC: 1-17.

6. Our colleague Hugh Trappes-Lomax has commented that our use of *error* and *interlanguage* implies deviation from a single, standard variety - a point we accept. Any guidance material should also draw students' attention to the degree of permissible variation (different 'dialects' and 'styles' of bibliography, e.g. depending whether or not one is writing for publication). On a related issue, see Owusu-Ansah (this volume).

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Appendix

name .....

A fellow-student on the M.Sc. has just completed an assignment and has asked you to check through their draft bibliography, an extract from which is reproduced below.

1. If you feel something is WRONG, correct it.
2. If you feel that something has been OMITTED, indicate what needs to be added.

****

Ferguson, C.A. (1959) in P.P. Gigioli: Language and Social Context London: Penguuin

Haugen, E. (1966) Dialect, Language, Nation In Pride, J.B. & Janet Holmes (eds) (1972) Sociolinguistics. Baltimore, USA. Penguin Books Limited

Lynch, Tony. (1988) Speaking up or talking down. English Language Teaching Journal

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